Iqbal EXPLORE Response

Iqbal is a realistic fiction book written in novel form. The author of this book is Francesco D’Adamo. Chapter 1 of Iqbal began with all the child labourers eating together at dawn. After they finished eating, they proceeded to their workplace where they each took turns using the Turkish toilets. The numskulls (children who work slowly and did a poor job) were the first ones to go. When they all finished, they all began working on their carpets and at the end of the day, their master would inspect what they did. If they did a good job, a line would be erased from their slate and they would owe one less rupee.

I think that the author’s purpose for writing this is to make others aware of child labour. Child labourers are children who are employed to work for others and it is a large issue all around the world. Many children are working instead of getting an education so I think that it is important for people to know about child labour. My purpose for reading this is to learn more about child labour. Just by reading the first chapter, I have already learned a few things about child labour and what child labourers do. For example, I learned that a reason why children are employed to weave carpets is because they have small fingers which allow them to work quickly and accurately.

Key words worth remembering are Iqbal, Hussain Khan, Fatima, Lahore, the carpet factory, and numskulls. Iqbal, Hussain Khan, and Fatima are the main characters so they are important to remember. Numskulls are also important since that is what some of the children are called and Lahore and the carpet factory are key words since they are where the story takes place. Two key lines from the text are “I never saw a clean slate, neither mine nor one of my companions” from page 5 and “My hands worked on their own, out of habit” from page 7. The first one was chosen as a key line because the lines on the slate represent the dept the children have to pay off and if Fatima never saw a clean slate, that means that there hasn’t been a person who has paid off all of their debt. That must also mean that The children owe a lot since Fatima has been working at the factory for 3 years. I chose the second one as a key line because I think that Fatima has been doing the same thing for a long time so she began to work and weave carpets automatically.

This book is written in novel form and is organised in chapters which helped me read this book. The chapters made it easier for me to read since it divided the whole story into different parts. Having separate parts make things easier for me to understand because each chapter focuses on something different. Without the chapters, this book would be confusing since there wouldn’t be anything to sort out all the different sections. The chapters of the book also help me keep track of where I am and also help me locate where I had previously stopped reading. What got in the way of my understanding was the way the chapters were labelled. Instead of titles, the chapters were numbered. It would have been better if there where titles since they would give you an idea of what the chapter would be about.

I can relate to Iqbal since, like Fatima, I have things that I’m responsible for such as chores and schoolwork. Even though I have things that I must do like Fatima, unlike her, I’m not forced to do them nor am I paid. I am also not threatened if I refuse to do my work.

Two questions that I came up with are What debt does Fatima have to pay off and? and How much does Fatima’s family owe? I thought of the first question when I read about the slate and why it was important. Since Fatima has been working everyday for the past 3 years, I think that she must owe a lot of money. As I was reading the book, I also wondered why Fatima’s family was in debt and also how did they become indebted to someone who runs a carpet factory. I think that Fatima’s family is debt because they borrowed money from Hussain Khan (the factory owner) in order to pay off another debt. Iqbal reminded me of a kid my teacher had told me about when I was grade 4. The kid was a child labourer and worked in a factory similar to the one in Iqbal. The factory owner was very cruel and treated him harshly. They barely gave him any food or water and even threatened to kill those who attempted to escape. The kid worked there for several years and eventually escaped when he was around 8 years old. He later joined a group that tries to stop child labour and was shot and killed when he was about 12 years old.